



The Virginia Saltwater Review

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by

Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division

OVERVIEW

At press time, the forecast for the upcoming weekend was for winds of various strength and northerly directions through Sunday, temperatures in the 70's, with a possibility of southerly winds and 80's by Monday, Memorial Day.



And in mentioning Memorial Day, don't forget this is not just a long weekend of fishing bliss and opportunity. This is a day of remembrance for those that have given their lives for our country, proof that the freedoms we enjoy every day are not free. Please take a moment to remember those that have given so much for so many.

There has been some spotty flounder action in the past week, reports of young cobia, and searches for trout, but the drum fishing, whether for red drum or black drum, continues to be the news highlight. Last weekend, the 2nd Annual Black Drum World Championship Fishing Tournament, based out of Bay Creek Marina in Cape Charles, was held with over 350 anglers participating in the two-day tournament. The VMRC Fisheries Management Division's Biological Sampling Team was present, collecting biological information on 64 black drum (length, weight, sex, and otoliths to age). More information about the tournament results, including who won, can be found from a press release from the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce on page 7. Also, based on the number of filleted black drum samples that have been provided to the Marine Sportfish Collection Project (see page 8) freezers at Chris' Bait and Tackle, the bite continues to be strong. Repeatedly, staff has gone over to empty a freezer, and Chris and Mark Snook are back on the phone within 24 hours telling us they are full again. Thank-you to all that are providing these valuable samples and abundance of information.





Photos: (Left) One of many black drum weighed in at the Black Drum World Championship this past weekend, May 17-18, 2008. (Right) Members of the VMRC biological sampling team in action, processing one of 64 black drum provided through the tournament.

And another reminder that we need length data from the red drum you catch-and-release. In 2009, there will be a coastwide (Virginia to Florida) stock assessment of the red drum population, and information is lacking on the catch-and-release of red drum outside of the management slot limit (18 to 26 inches). You can provide length and location information through the Virginia Saltwater Fisherman's Journal (www.vasaltwaterjournal.com). See page 9 for general details about the website.



THE FISHING REPORTS

Chincoteague-

According to Donna at Captain Bob's, waters around Chincoteague are beginning to clear, and anglers are finding puffers, kingfish, and shark. This is mixed with ever-improving flounder fishing, and the surf is hot with drum and striped bass fishing. Queen's Sound, between red buoy 20 and green buoy 32, is still the primary hotspot for anglers leaving Captain Bob's, but Donna is getting reports of good flounder fishing in the Assateague Channel. Offshore, the wrecks produced limits of black sea bass over the past week.

Wachapreague –

Fishing has been slow out at the Wachapreague Marina this week. Windy conditions have kept most boaters at the dock. Some anglers have been able to catch some keeper flounder throughout the area.

Captain Zed's reports nice flounder fishing at Bulls Head and Bradford's Bay from buoy 132 down to buoy 136. Staff has received reports of numerous throwbacks, but nice keeper-sized fish (19 inches) are mixed in. As always, Drawing and Green Channels have produced on the outgoing tide, where nice flounder and a few black drum have been caught. Out of Wachapreague Inlet, small striped bass are beginning to show. Staff is looking forward to a good weekend with nice weather.

Cape Charles -

Black drum are being landed in large numbers at Chris' Bait and Tackle. Approximately 50 release citations were recorded last week for black drum alone. All were caught between buoys 16 and 13 near Kiptopeke. Flounder were also caught seaside of the Eastern Shore, out of Oyster, and bayside of the Eastern Shore, near buoy 36A in Cape Charles. No flounder citations were recorded, but many were close—in the five to six-pound range. Croaker have also been caught at Morley's Wharf in Exmore and off of local piers.

Because campers have not yet arrived for the season, there is very little action at Cherrystone Bait and tackle. Staff there has seen a few black drum.

Onancock –

Captain Wil reports improving fishing conditions in Onancock. Recent fishing trips have produced some keeper flounder, sea mullet and, of course, plenty of croaker. Nice striped bass have been caught by those targeting them. A few red drum have also been landed. Windy conditions have kept a lot of the fishing pressure down, but fishing has been good in shallow water using squid as bait. The local water temperature is around 65 degrees.

Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel –

Red drum action is heating up at Cobs Marina this week. Several release citations have been reported lately in the 50-inch range. On May 17th, angler Randy Price earned a release citation for a 51-inch red drum while fishing onboard the BLITZ. This fish, along with several others, was hooked at Nine Foot Shoals using crab.

At Sunset Boating Center, staff reports citations for both red and black drum. The best action has been at buoy 13 and at Nautilus Shoal. Anglers Keith Blackburn and Andy Hammonds each earned drum citations this week for both a black drum and a red drum.

Salt Ponds Marina reports the usual catch for this time of year: flounder. Other than the reports of flounder, a few large black drum have also been caught in the area. Staff says that gas prices and high winds have kept fishing relatively slow this week.

According to staff at York River Fishing Center, now that the fish are cooperating, the weather refuses! Those that did go out between the wind and the rain have caught a few release citations for red drum around Fisherman's Island. Catches of numerous croaker and spot are also reported from Gloucester Point Pier. Large flounder with some keepers mixed in were reported around York Spit near the drop off.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

Offshore fishing has taken off. Some good water has pushed in east of the Cigar, and it is full of tuna and large dolphin. The action continues in Hatteras with excellent tuna action with some billfish mixed in. Red and black drum fishing remains very, very good from Fisherman's Island to the Inner Middle Ground area. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) and speckled trout are being caught in the shallows from York River to Back River. Spadefish are around, but thus far have been hard to catch. The Cell and Wolftrap Light areas are actually the best early spots for spadefish as water temperatures there are warmer than out at the Chesapeake Light Tower. Some sheepshead have been caught by anglers targeting drum. There are probably some cobia around, but it will be a few more weeks before that bite gets going. This is the time of the year when there should be some big grey trout at the Cell.. There are plenty of small bluefish throughout the lower Chesapeake Bay with choppers on the South East Lumps and the Hot Dog. Keeper-sized striped bass are being caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. Some nice flounder have been caught along the bayside of the Eastern Shore from 36A to the Cell.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

The predicted decent weather paired up with cooperative fish should make this Memorial Day weekend a great lead-in for the summer fishing season. The red and black drum bite continues to keep anglers fully occupied, with most boats reporting multiple hook-ups and impressive catches of big fish. Most black drum continue to come from the bayside shoals of the Eastern Shore near buoys 13 and 16, where sea clams and chowder clams are working as bait. Chris Snook at Chris' Bait and Tackle boasts that they registered 40 to 50 black drum release citations this week. In order to earn a release citation from the state of Virginia, a fish must measure at least 46 inches long. Big red drum catches are still on the rise as these fish scour the shoals in search of prey during the full moon cycle. The Nine Foot Shoals and the shoals and sloughs just east and south of Fisherman's Island in 6 to 20 feet of water are producing exceptional red action, with a few bulls pushing to 57-inches reported. Many boats are also finding a mix of reds and blacks in these areas lately. Several boats are also experiencing very good luck trolling spoons over the seaside shoals.

Spadefish are here and will become active at the Cell, Wolftrap Light, the Range Tower, and the Chesapeake Light Tower when the waters warm up a bit. A few smaller fish were caught this week with much effort, as the bite is very slow. Look for sheepshead and cobia to join in next.

A black sea bass trip is still a worthwhile venture as these fish continue to congregate around offshore and inshore structures. Captain Fred Feller's crew aboard the Rudee Angler out of the Fishing Center scored with a nice mess of seabass at the Triangle wrecks this week, with a few weighing in at over five pounds. Tautog are still taking bait along the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and inshore wrecks for those interested in catch and release action. Anglers fishing from the Seagull Pier hooked togs to about 6 pounds this week.

Flounder are still hit and miss right now, as the water remains muddy from intermittent storms and westerly winds. Limits of keeper fish to over 21 inches are taking minnows and strip bait within Rudee Inlet. A few speckled trout are also hitting grubs, while taylor bluefish will be happy to take

your offering anywhere within the inlet. The basin within Lynnhaven is also producing consistent numbers of keeper flounder, along with some puppy drum (juvenile red drum).

Those hunting for hardheads can find bait-sized croaker, perfect for live-baiting striped bass, off of Ocean View, the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, the small boat channel, and around the first island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Schoolie-sized and keeper-sized rockfish to 15-pounds are cooperating with live bait over all four tubes of the artificial islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, as well as the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. Be sure to review the current striped bass regulations at www.mrc.virginia.gov. Keeper grey trout are still available around the northern span of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the Concrete Ships on live bait or lures. The Cell may also produce some big grey trout, but no word as of yet.

The offshore scene is looking up as the first tuna catches hit the dock this week. Bob Dubell and his crew aboard the STILL THINK'N made the run recently. The group was rewarded with several nice yellowfin tuna and a big gaffer dolphin. The mahi tipped the scales at 38.5 pounds. Blueline tilefish are active in over 300 feet of water. These fish will take most any cut bait, and can also supplement any slow offshore outing.

Virginia Middle Bay –

Despite the windy week, anglers are catching striped bass and croaker near Jett's Hardware this week. Most of that action has been up in the rivers. Staff expects to have more to report after this weekend because people are finally going to be able to get out and fish!

According to staff from Smith Point Marina, anglers have found success chumming for striped bass; however, few large striped bass have been found lately. Some flounder have been landed near the jetties, but weather has prevented most fishing activity this week.

Captain Jim Thompson from Deltaville reports the fishing in the Rappahannock and Piankatank Rivers has not been great, but croaker of medium size and small spot can still be found. The best fishing location has been Butlers Hole. For bait, he suggests blood worms and squid. Some small trout were hooked, but no keepers have been caught yet. Numerous young cobia have been seen in the area. Up the Rappahannock River to the Norris Bridge, fishing has been spotty with only a few catches of croaker. Across the Bay, near the Cell, croaker are being netted and caught, but they are not hitting hard because the water temperature is down to 63 degrees. The fish are out there, but it will take some serious increase in temperature to get them biting. Maybe it will be this week.

Virginia Beach –

At the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, flounder and spot are biting in Rudee Inlet. According to staff, 1 out of every 4 flounder hooked has been keeper-sized (19 inches). Nice black drum and large striped bass were found in the Chesapeake Bay. Offshore action last week produced yellowfin tuna and dolphin. Additional offshore trips are planned this weekend.

Paula at Fisherman's Wharf Marina reports that offshore boats have caught yellowfin tuna and a 38-pound

dolphin was landed from the 350 line. Inshore, anglers are generally targeting drum with some success. Several release citations have come in this week.

Virginia Piers –

Croaker, sea mullet, and a few flounder have been hooked from the Ocean View Pier this week. However, it is blue crabs that are the most notable. Staff reports that the blue crab action off of the pier is the best they have seen in the past several years.

At the Lynnhaven Pier, anglers have found a mix of spot, sea mullet, croaker, bluefish, and grey trout. Staff there says that the fishing has been steady.

Bluefish and sea mullet were caught recently at the Virginia Beach Pier. Over the past week, small flounder and small spot were biting. Fishing is beginning to improve now that water temperatures are rising.

Staff at Sandbridge Pier reports a catch of a few bluefish, with some skate and spot mixed in. Last Saturday, a puppy drum was landed from the pier. Fishing has been slow due to the recent windy conditions.

Outer Banks, NC –

At the Avalon Fishing Pier, bluefish have been seen in the morning hours, but have been elusive later in the day. The recent storms have been keeping most of the bottom fishing at bay, but some of that has picked up since the storms have moved out. A few croaker have been caught from the south side of the pier.

Tuna, big eye and yellowfin, were the stars of offshore fishing this week at the Oregon Inlet Fishing Center. The big eye tuna ranged from 88 to 140 pounds, with few under 100 pounds. The yellowfin were also large with one weighing over 70 pounds. Several gaffer-sized dolphin were caught weighing up to 35 pounds. Inshore, there were reports of tailor bluefish, speckled trout, and flounder. Cobia are also beginning to move in.

At Pirates Cove Marina, inshore action is primarily bluefish being landed around the inlet. Offshore action is heating up with lots of dolphin mixed with yellowfin and big eye tuna in the 20 to 120-pound class.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce 2008 Black Drum World Championship Fishing Tournament

Press Release

For Immediate Release
May 20, 2008

Cape Charles, VA – A 79.18 pound black drum landed by Belle Haven, Va., angler Joseph Harrison took top honors in the 2008 Black Drum World Championship Fishing Tournament held May 16-18, 2008 out of Bay Creek Marina in Cape Charles, Va. Harrison was fishing with team captain Jerry Moore of Exmore, Va., and fellow anglers Tommy Lewis and Chase Sturgis aboard the boat Running on Empty.

Team Running on Empty earned a \$3,000 check for its efforts. Each team member also will receive an engraved wall plaque featuring a miniature hand-painted black drum mount. In addition, the angler and team name will be engraved on the tournament's perpetual trophy, a black drum sculpture created by Turner Sculpture of Melfa, Va.

Parksley, Va.'s Ruby Taylor became the first female angler in the two-year history of the championship to claim one of the tournament's top positions. Taylor landed a 76.35 pound black drum on the second day of fishing to take second place in the event. Taylor was fishing with husband and team captain Fletcher "Buddy" Taylor IV and fellow anglers Charles Gardner, Stacie Gardner, LeeAnne Taylor, and Seth Taylor aboard the boat Ultimate Tease. The Ultimate Tease crew earned a \$2,000 check and individual custom wall plaques for their effort.

The third-place fish weighing in at 74.96 lbs., was captured by Bear, Delaware's Jeff Macaron. Macaron was fishing aboard Rock Bottom, captained by Bill Petka of Belle Haven, Va. David Rew, Kevin Sherwood, Will Sexauer, and Chris Sexauer rounded out the Rock Bottom's crew. The third-place catch was good for \$1,000 and individual custom plaques.

The crew aboard the Eleanor Susan took first place in the Conservation Division with eight tagged black drum. Participants in this division were registered members of the Virginia Gamefish Tagging Program. Team captain Bill Brown of Keller, Va., and anglers Will Brown, Darden Barrett, and J.P. Hubbard earned individual custom wall plaques for their tagging effort. The Conservation Division Awards were sponsored by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission.

The 2008 Black Drum World Championship attracted a field of 336 anglers and 66 vessels. Anglers hailed from eight states, ranging from New York to Alabama, and as far west as West Virginia and Ohio.

Fish entered in the tournament were subject to examination by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's Fisheries Management Division, which was able to obtain biological samples for use in its Black Drum Stock Assessment Program. Anglers contributing to this program were awarded special hats or shirts for their participation. The VMRC Biological Sampling Team examined and collected samples from 64 fish during the tournament.

Another beneficiary of the tournament was the Foodbank on the Eastern Shore, which received more than 1,200 pounds of donated fish. The drum will be distributed to needy families on the Eastern Shore of Virginia.












Plans are already under way for the 2009 Black Drum World Championship Fishing Tournament out of the luxurious Bay Creek Resort and Club (www.baycreek.net) scheduled for May 15-17, 2009. To receive information or registration information, contact the Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce at (757) 787-2460 or at www.esvachamber.org.

**THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
WANTS YOUR FISH....
TO MEASURE AND AGE.**

You catch it, you fillet it,
**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.**



The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA		RED DRUM	
SHEEPSHEAD		BLACK DRUM	
SPADEFISH		TAUTOG	
TILEFISH		GROUPE	
KING MACKEREL		SPANISH MACKEREL	
BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)			

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a **ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH.**

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

Bell Isle Marine (Hampton)

Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)

Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)

Wachapreague Marina

Morningstar Marina – Gwynn's Island (formerly known as the Gwynn's Island Boatel)



Website: http://mrc.virginia.gov/rec_assessment/index.shtm

As of 05/16/2008



ATTENTION: VIRGINIA SALTWATER JOURNAL WEBSITE HAS BEEN UPDATED!

You will now be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released. Staff has updated the website to include this expanded tool, so on those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the 50 caught and a range of lengths. But remember, for more high profile species, such as Red Drum, Striped Bass, and Flounder (to name a few), individual measurements on caught and released fish places a greater value on the data you are providing.

WWW.VASALTWATERJOURNAL.COM

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Address: https://192.168.0.15/vasalwaterjournal/journal_entry.php

Search: Google

Virginia Marine Resour... mafmc.htm SAFMC New Site > Ho... NOAA Home Page Atlantic States Marine ... Striped Bass Charter B... CFLS Virginia Marine Resou... Recreational Fishing O... Welcome to ACCSP

Identification of **launch site** will allow fishery managers to evaluate and update the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) site register and thereby improve the data collected by the angler interviews.

Weather:

Seas:

Wind Speed:

Wind Direction:

Time of Day:

Moon Phase:

Air Temp (F):

Water Temp (F):

Number of Anglers Reporting For:

Hours Fished:

Notes:

To record your fish, click the "Add Fish" button below for each fish you intend to record. Record lengths in decimal format for partial inches (ex. 33.25). Total length is measured in a straightline from tip of nose to tip of tail. If you would like to make your catch data available to other anglers, ensure 'Make Public' is checked. To make your catch information only accessible to you(private), uncheck 'Make Public'. All catch data, both public and private, will be analyzed in aggregate by the VMRC and will never be associated with the individual angler.

Record Your Catch

*** Required Fields: Species, Qty, Length (Minimum length for released fish), Catch**

You may enter a size range for released fish. The minimum length is required. For kept fish, the length is required.

(1) Kept Fish

*Species: *Qty: *Length(inches): Weight(lb):

Method: Bait: Tide: ☒ Make Public

(2) Released Fish

*Species: *Qty: Enter Length Range *Min Length(inches): Max Length(inches):

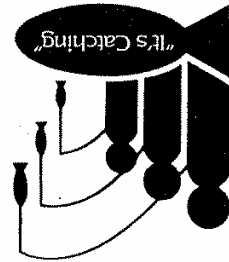
Method: Bait: Tide: ☒ Make Public

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Practice

CAREFUL CATCH

REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH

Exhaustion * Loss of Slime * Wounds * Time out of Water